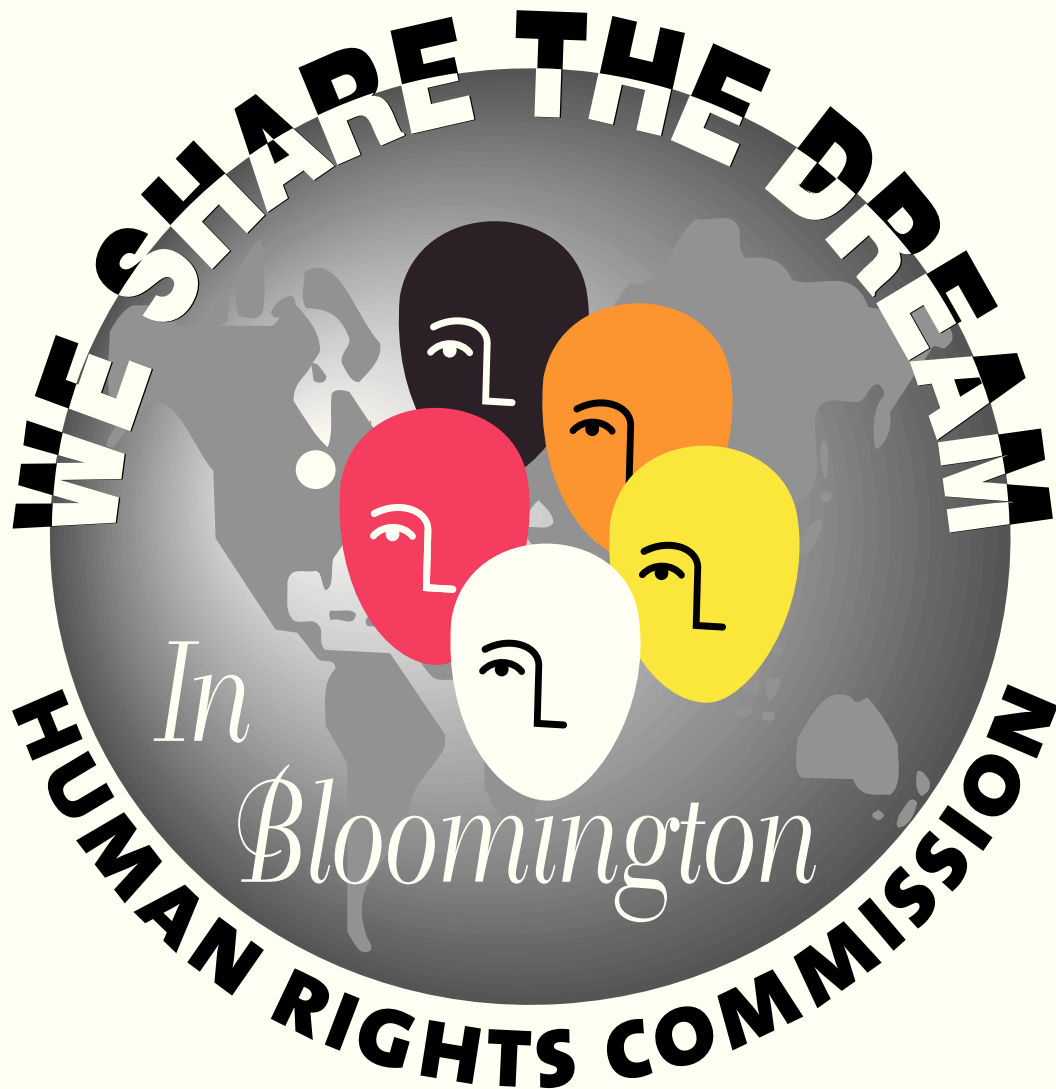


Human Rights Commission 2015 Annual Report



1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431-3027

Bloomington Human Rights Commission

2015 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission has individually and collectively played an active part in many areas relating to human rights and equality during 2015. Activities included relationship-building with City Commissions/Boards and community organizations, educational events, school district involvement, participation in community activities, Commissioner education, and complaint mediation.

PURPOSE

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission advises the Bloomington City Council in matters of human rights and equal opportunity for all people in our City.

The Commission is dedicated to ensure all people of Bloomington have equal opportunity and rights as defined by the Minnesota Human Rights Act, Chapter 363A of the State Statutes. The Act makes it illegal to discriminate in the areas of:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aiding and Abetting | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Accommodations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Reprisal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | |

The Minnesota Human Rights Act makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age | <input type="checkbox"/> Marital status |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creed | <input type="checkbox"/> National origin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Color | <input type="checkbox"/> Race |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dependence on public assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Familial status | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual preference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Commission status | |

ACTION CATEGORIES

Using these Guiding Principles, Human Rights Commissioners chose four (4) categories from “Building Inclusive Communities, An Action Guide for City Leaders,” published by the League of Minnesota Cities. Those categories are as follows:

- 1. Cultural Competence**
- 2. Equality**
- 3. Leadership**
- 4. Public Relations**

Remarks describing the intent of each selected category and descriptions of our activities related to each category in which the Human Rights Commission engaged follow

- 1. Cultural Competence:** “Cultural competence is a willingness to learn and listen. It is a being welcoming and dropping defenses. It is asking rather than assuming. It is a permanent way of changing how community issues are communicated and approached.”

Commissioners take an active role in learning about people who live and work in our community as a means of understanding and appreciating other points of view.

Commissioners’ sponsored/co-sponsored the following:

- **A Workshop on mental health issues** featuring speakers from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) at the Block Captains Workshop on Saturday, March 21 at Bloomington Civic Plaza. The HRC also provided a booth with Human Rights information and materials.
- **Accepted Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month Proclamation**, at the April 6 City Council Meeting.
- **The Transfer of Memory Exhibit** on May 4 – May 25 at Bloomington Civic Plaza (lobby). The photo exhibit was created by the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) with support from Tolerance Minnesota to display Holocaust survivors living in Minnesota.
- **Fred Amram, a Holocaust Survivor, discussed growing up in Nazi-era Germany – How did the Holocaust begin? Were there any warning signs?** The event took place on Tuesday, May 19 at the Bloomington Civic Plaza, Schneider Theater.

- **Accepted the LGBT Pride Month Proclamation**, at the Monday, June 1 City Council Meeting. The Proclamation focused on tolerance, justice and dignity for all.
- **A Commissioner represented the HRC at the “Minnesota Twins Diversity Night”** at Target Field, July 7, 2015.
- **Accepted the International Day of Peace Proclamation**, at the August 21 City Council Meeting.
- **A Naturalization Ceremony** with the US District Courts, District of Minnesota, US Citizenship and Immigration Service, and Bloomington League of Women Voters at Bloomington Civic Plaza, welcoming 190 new citizens from 59 different countries who live in southern Hennepin County, September 9.
- **“A Peace of My Mind Exhibit” and Keynote Speaker.** The exhibit depicted 52 photos and personal stories of Minnesotans who were asked the question, “What does peace mean to you?”. Bloomington resident, John Noltner, is the creator/photographer of the exhibit which also included portraits of some Bloomington residents. Noltner’s exhibit has been displayed across the Nation. The exhibit was available for viewing from September 15 – October 4 in the lobby of Bloomington Civic Plaza. Mr. Noltner was the keynote speaker at an event on Tuesday, September 22 to speak about the project. The exhibit and event were held by the HRC in honor of International Day of Peace.
- **A Human Rights Commission booth during Heritage Days**, Saturday, September 19 at Nativity of St. Mary’s Church site, 9900 Lyndale Avenue South, Bloomington. The Commission also sponsored five (5) live multicultural entertainment groups.
- **A Commissioner represented the HRC at “The Search For Home”** at Normandale Hyland Methodist Church, sponsored by the League of Women Voters on October 8, 2015.
- **“Tracks in the Snow: The Minnesota Muslim Experience Exhibit”.** This exhibit is the third phase of the Minnesota Muslim Experience project produced by the Islamic Resource Group (IRG). The traveling exhibit is designed to expose viewers to the untold narratives of Minnesota Muslims, with a diverse representation of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to celebrate the traits that make Minnesota special. The exhibit is educational to viewers: it redefines that narrative about Minnesota Muslims by fostering authentic dialog and sharing the untold stories of Minnesota Muslims in the community. The Commission hosted the 3-week exhibit October 13 – November 5. It consisted of twenty-five canvasses with a portrait of an individual accompanied by a written interview, and five retractable banners that introduce the five themes that include diversity, empowerment, faithfulness, being Minnesotan and having deep roots.

- **Participated in “Community Conversations”.** Chairperson Dennis Kane participated in a community wide conversation about the relationship between the community and the Police Departments of Richfield and Bloomington. The meeting was held Sunday, October 18 at the Richfield Middle School.
- **Assisted with the Workshop “Voices Heard: A Conversation Between Youth and Cops”.** Chairperson Dennis Kane assisted in facilitating table top discussions after the event of bringing youth and cops together to share their stories and experiences regarding police community relations, November 17, in the Schneider Theater at Bloomington Civic Plaza.
- **A Commissioner represented the HRC at the State Human Rights Symposium.** The Minnesota State Department of Human Rights offered a Symposium on Thursday, December 3 at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education Conference Center, St. Paul. The Symposium covered Voting Rights, Disability and Employment, Employment Law Updates, and recent Supreme Court Decisions.

Monthly programs included:

- Doug Belton, Community Liaison for the Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP) spoke to the HRC at its meeting on February 24.
- Nancy Blankfard, HGA, Associate Vice President, spoke to the Commission about the potential of a new Community Center and sought input regarding community need on March 16
- Jamie Verbrugge, City Manager, provided information on himself and provided an overview of the State of the City address on May 18.
- Julie Long, Civil Engineer, City of Bloomington, discussed the City’s Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan for Public Right-of-Way on June 15.
- Dr. Joyce Ester, President of Normandale Community College, discussed Normandale College’s Human Rights and Diversity activities on July 20.
- A representative from Bloomington Public Health presented the policy on Human Subjects Research and Protection on September 21.
- Diann Kirby, Director of Community Services, presented the 2015 highlights of the National Citizen Survey on October 19.

2. Equality: “Improve cross-cultural understanding and acceptance.”

- **Accepted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Proclamation** at the City Council January 5 Meeting and January 12 School Board meeting.
- **Co-sponsored Black History events:**
 - **“Underground Railroad Quilts: Fact or Fiction?”**, Pastor Deb Meyer from St. Paul’s United Church of Christ in Henderson, MN unraveled the history of the freedom quilts that were believed to

have guided slaves along the Underground Railroad. Co-sponsored by the Bloomington Historical Society, this event took place on Sunday, February 22 at the old Town Hall

- **"Thurgood Marshall Community Event"**, a screening of Mr. Civil Rights: Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP – A South Hill film presented by American Public Television on PBS and panel discussion took place on Tuesday, May 12 at Bloomington Civic Plaza. Co-sponsored by the U.S. District Court and the District of Minnesota Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.
 - **Classroom presentations at Kennedy and Jefferson High Schools** occurred on April 20 and April 24, featuring a panel of minority judges and lawyers discussion their personal stories on how they were able to achieve significant careers in law.
 - **In a General Assembly** April 29, both High Schools saw a Theater Production by the Illusion Theater portraying Thurgood Marshall's life story.
- **Diversity Day:**
 - Diversity Day at the Bloomington public high schools on May 1. Kevin Kling, playwright and storyteller, spoke to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **ADA – 25th Anniversary:**
 - The Bloomington Human Rights Commission sponsored a Community Event, July 23 at Bloomington Civic Plaza, to celebrate the recommitment to full implementation of the ADA. A Proclamation was presented at the July 6 City Council meeting.
- **Accepted Human Rights Day Proclamation** at the December 7 City Council Meeting and November 23 School Board Meeting.

3. Leadership: "Being a successful leader of a multicultural community also means recognizing and fostering leadership in others."

- **Human Rights Campaign Foundation:**
 - The City of Bloomington was selected for inclusion in the Human Rights Campaign's 2015 Municipal Equality Index. The index examines the laws, policies, and progress toward equality being made by US cities and municipalities. Bloomington was selected because it is one of the top five largest cities in the State.
- **2015 Omar Bonderud Award:**
 - The 2015 Omar Bonderud Award was presented to the Honorable Michael J. Davis and the Honorable Donovan W. Frank for their extremely high impact in raising awareness of discrimination based on race, national origin and disability. In addition, they provided leadership in the Dred and Harriet Scott recognition

event, the Freedom Riders Exhibit, Naturalization Ceremonies, Mr. Civil Rights (Thurgood Marshall) Program, and the 25th Anniversary of the ADA.

- **Volunteer Recognition:**
 - Two Commissioners received the Proclamation at the April 6 City Council meeting for Volunteer Recognition week, thanking volunteers for their outstanding service to the Community and the City.
 - HRC members were recognized at the All-City Volunteer Recognition on Saturday, April 18, Knights of Columbus, Bloomington.
- **Healing Minnesota Stories:**
 - The HRC participated in a committee with a Native American organization called “Healing Minnesota Stories” addressing concerns about the Minnesota State Capitol artwork and its incomplete version of history and offensive images of Native Americans.
- **PACER Unity Awards:**
 - The Bloomington HRC and PACER honored students and community members who had gone above and beyond to address bullying on Tuesday, June 9 at Bloomington Civic Plaza. Recognition was given to those who had made outstanding contributions to address and prevent bullying.

4. Public Relations: “Increased visibility will allow more citizens to access our services and increased communications will keep the Commission aware of events and trends in the community.”

- Participated in District Diversity Advisory Council (DDAC) through a Commission liaison.
- A representative from the HRC served on the Jefferson High School Diversity Committee.
- The Commission started an e-scribe newsletter, distributing information via social media on HRC events and activities.
- The Commission created digital pages of information on specific Human Rights protected classes and areas of discrimination covered by the State of Minnesota State Human Rights Act 363A. The information is available on the City’s website.
- The Commission started using business cards to enhance their connections with people they meet in the community.
- A Commissioner represented the HRC at a meeting sponsored by Human Services and shared information with staff of the African Community

Senior Services Organization. The meeting took place March 3 at Bloomington Civic Plaza.

- Commissioners attended a Meet & Greet for the Somali community sponsored by Bloomington Public Health on March 5 at Bloomington Civic Plaza.
- Representatives of the HRC attended the annual State of the City Luncheon at the Radisson Blu on March 18.
- Participated in the Egg Hunt and Family Fun Walk, with booth and information materials, Normandale Lake Bandshell, April 4.
- Commissioners sponsored a booth and participated in a Community Resource Fair at Metro South, March 1.
- The Commission staffed a booth at the “International Womens Day Event”, March 8, sponsored by the Women Child Safe Center.
- Kennedy High School had its 2nd Annual Community Enrichment Fair April 23. Information and resources were provided to Kennedy students and their families.
- The HRC had a booth at Oak Grove Middle School, April 25, “Celebrating your differences together”. This was a family event for all ages.
- Commissioners were represented at the April 28 film “Documented”, shown at the Bloomington Civic Plaza, Schneider Theater, sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP).
- Co-sponsored Diversity Day with Independent School District 271 involving Jefferson and Kennedy High Schools and Olson Middle School throughout April and May:
 - Recognized Madison Kuehn, Jefferson High School student at the April 20 City Council meeting and April 27 School Board meeting for winning the Diversity Day 2015 t-shirt logo design.
 - Booth and materials as a part of interactive display booths at all three schools.
 - A Peace Run, Walk and Roll involving 320 Bloomington high school students, May 1.
- A Commissioner represented the HRC at “It’s Time To Talk About Race”, a community conversation about race that featured Luis Versailles, May 9, Kennedy High School.
- Commissioners attended (14) National Night Out Get-Togethers on August 4. Packets with HRC information were distributed to National Night Out Neighborhoods visited in Bloomington.
- The Commission made a presentation on August 26 about Human Rights and the activities of the HRC to Penelope 35, a residence for older adults in Bloomington.

- Sponsored a booth and distributed Human Rights information and materials at the Business Day at City Hall event, September 18, Bloomington Civic Plaza.
- Sponsored booth and materials distribution at Heritage Days Celebration on September 19 and featured entertainment provided by Iny Asian Dance Theater, Los Alegres Bailadores, Mariachi Son de Moralos, Harisen Daiko, Circus Manduhai, and Sansei Yonsei Kai.
- Sponsored a booth at the Creekside Community Center Open House Saturday, October 3.

Mediation

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission offers mediation services to its citizens regarding human rights. Commissioner Kane is a qualified mediator. Five (5) complaints/inquiries were received and processed.

COMMISSION COMPOSITION

The Commission is comprised of 7 adult members and 2 youth members. The adult members are appointed for 2-year terms and the youth for 1-year terms. All members have full voting privileges. The City provides staff to assist the Commission.

Commissioners:

Whitney Batterson (Youth) – *Resigned 12/15*

Daniela Kunkel (Youth)

John Doble – *Resigned 12/15*

Sheila Fishman

Dennis Kane (Chair)

Jessica Kietzman – *Resigned 10/15*

Jared Leese (First Vice Chair)

Johnathon McClellan

Ibrahim Yusuf

The Commission has two (2) adult and one (1) youth vacancies as of December 31, 2015.

Direct Staff

Staff Liaison: Lorinda Pearson, Manager, Human Services Division

Staff Secretary: Heather Lambert, Administrative Assistant, Human Services Division